



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

July 22, 2004

Contact: Dean Boyd
202.616.6907

FACT SHEET

ICE COUNTER-NARCOTICS EFFORTS



The resolve of the Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is to close down vulnerabilities – vulnerabilities that weaken our national security, that expose our borders to infiltration, and that subject our financial systems to exploitation. Drug smuggling is a direct threat to America's border security. The laundering of drug proceeds through U.S. financial systems is a direct threat to America's economic security. The violence and health problems associated with illegal drug activity pose direct threats to public security. For these reasons, a key priority of ICE is to investigate, disrupt, and dismantle global drug trafficking organizations.

Combining information from by ICE's Office of Intelligence, the assets of ICE's Office Air and Marine Operations, and the authorities and investigative strategies of ICE's Office of Investigations, ICE has seized more than 3,030,499 pounds of illegal narcotics since the agency was created on March 1, 2003. More importantly, ICE has helped reduce critical vulnerabilities in America's border and economic security by dismantling some of the world's most notorious criminal drug organizations in this short period of time.

ICE Office of Investigations

ICE's Office of Investigations, which boasts thousands of special agents, oversees programs designed to identify, disrupt and dismantle international drug trafficking and money laundering organizations. ICE agents use unparalleled border authorities, extensive undercover operations, and more than 30 years experience in combating financial crimes and drug smuggling activity to target drug trafficking organizations. A critical asset in their efforts is the cadre of ICE Attaches posted in nations around the globe who coordinate with host nation law enforcement and other agencies on drug money laundering and other investigations.

In one recent example, ICE agents in New York and Colombia collaborated on a long-term drug money laundering investigation that began with raids on three small businesses in Queens and ultimately resulted in charges against Colombia's most powerful drug cartel. This organization, Colombia's Norte Valle drug cartel, is responsible for roughly 30 to 50 percent of the cocaine that enters the United States. Indictments unsealed

in New York in May 2004 allege that this organization has moved more than \$10 billion worth of cocaine (1.2 million pounds) to America in the past 12 years. The El Dorado Task Force, an ICE/IRS anti-money laundering task force in New York, played the primary role in bringing evidence against the leadership of this cartel. In January 2004, the cartel's second-in-command was taken into custody by ICE agents in New York. The accused leader of the cartel was detained by Cuban authorities earlier this month.



ICE Office of Air and Marine Operations

ICE's Office of Air and Marine Operations, which includes some 1,000 pilots and marine officers, protects America by using an integrated air and marine force to deter, interdict, and prevent the unlawful movement of people and goods across U.S. borders. To combat drug organizations, AMO does not simply draw a curtain at the borders, but takes a multi-faceted, intelligence-based "Defense-in-Depth" approach. AMO disrupts and dismantles drug trafficking organizations by targeting the drug source zones in South America, the transit zones (Central America, East Pacific, and Caribbean) and finally the arrival zones along our southern borders.

Since the creation of ICE, our Air and Marine resources were involved in operations at home and abroad that resulted in the seizure of more than 90,757 pounds of cocaine and nearly 316,754 pounds of marijuana. These operations have also resulted in more than 1,239 arrests. In one initiative in the transit zone, for example, ICE



aircraft assisted the Mexican government in investigating and interdicting drug-laden aircraft landing in northern Mexico under an initiative called Operation Halcon. Using intelligence provided by the ICE Air and Marine Operations Center, ICE Citation aircraft based in Arizona intercept and track suspect aircraft to landing sites. Mexican ground forces are vectored to these sites for arrests and seizures. In Fiscal Year 2003, Operation Halcon resulted in the seizure of more than 9,000 pounds of illegal drugs, 14 aircraft, and 26 vehicles.

ICE Office of Intelligence

ICE's Office of Intelligence, which includes more than 430 agents, analysts, and officers, has integrated the intelligence components of the former U.S. Customs Service and the Immigration & Naturalization Service into a robust force that helps support the needs of ICE's counter-drug operations and other enforcement activities. The intelligence merger has resulted in a significantly increased capacity to track money, people, and contraband that threaten U.S. security. This office routinely generates information that results in arrests and seizures, including the interdiction of nearly 30 metric tons of cocaine during its first year of operations.

One key example of the role of intelligence in counter-drug efforts is "Operation Panama Express," a multi-agency investigation in Florida led by ICE, the FBI, the Drug Enforcement Administration, and the U.S. Coast Guard. Based on intelligence and source information, this joint operation has resulted in 614 arrests, and the seizure of more than 195 tons of cocaine and \$915,000. The investigation has also significantly disrupted certain maritime transportation routes used by Colombian drug organizations.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), responsible for the enforcement of border, economic, infrastructure, and

transportation security laws. ICE seeks to prevent acts of terrorism by targeting the people, money and materials that support terror and criminal networks.